

Y. Vankova

New Bulgarian University

Monsters in Translation

Summary

The article focuses on examples of domestication in the translated subtitles for Disney`s animation movie *Monsters Inc.* The translators of children`s movies are facing same problems as translators of children`s literature. All of them are transforming a written text for reading or listening. And all of them are translating for the same specialized auditory.

Key words

Translation Studies, translation of children`s literature, translation of animated movies

Translators of children's literature have the task of transforming a written text for young children. The texts are usually read aloud and perceived through listening. Parents act as readers and performers and therefore the book or text has to please them as well. Thus, translators always have to keep in mind that they are translating for a dual audience. The same situation can be seen in animated movies. Translations are again meant for both parents and children. The text is expected to be read by the parent (if the movie has subtitles) or listened to by the parent and the child (if the movie is dubbed). Therefore translators of animated movies face problems typical for translators of children's literature and both groups can be identified and named as translators of children's literature [O'Connell 2006].

There is an endless discussion about using domesticating or foreignizing approaches in translation. I think that when translating for young children domestication is the better approach - especially in the case of character's names and songs. I will illustrate my thesis with several examples from the animated movie *Monsters Inc.* As we know from the movie there are bad (Waternoose) and good (Sullivan) monsters¹. This is true for the translation as well – we have good examples (I called them “good monsters”) and not so good examples (I called them “bad monsters”). All examples are taken from the Bulgarian and English subtitles of Disney's animated movie *Monsters Inc.*

Character's names

We know that a character's name almost always has in it some features or characteristics of the character itself. There are four methods for translating characters' proper names. They can be kept as in the original. They can be adapted to the spelling and pronunciation of the target language. They can be replaced with proper names from the target language. Or they can be translated [Aguilera 2008]. I think that when it is possible, the character's name should be translated, especially when it gives some kind of feature to the character's temper or appearance:

1) 00:03:59,384 --> 00:04:00,646
Oh! Mr. Waternoose!

00:03:57,052 --> 00:03:58,220
Г- н Воднявски!

¹ Monster – плашилище, таласъм (goblin, a creature who scares children)

2) 00:09:59,692 --> 00:10:00,886
Ms.Fearmonger is on vacation

00:09:57,067 --> 00:10:00,028
Г- жа Страшун е в отпуск.

Songs and heroes

The Finish translator Ritta Oittinen writes that children love funny names and language expression. If parents think of something as stupid, it's interesting for the children. And because much of children's literature is read aloud, the translators have to translate not only for the parent's eyes, but also for the parent's ears and mouths. Oittinen also says that when she reads for example *Alice in Wonderland* she expects that the songs from the story should be able to be sung aloud by the parents. [Oittinen 2006].

I think that Oittinen's opinion can be related to subtitles as well. Since they are written text, they are read aloud (if listeners/viewers are of younger age), and they are listened to by children. Therefore the songs should also be able to be sung aloud. If they can't sound natural it is acceptable for them not to be translated, but to be replaced with familiar or even different songs from the target culture and language.

3) 00:05:43,959 --> 00:05:45,790
*I don't know,
but it's been said*
00:05:45,828 --> 00:05:47,420
I love scaring kids in bed!

00:05:41,612 --> 00:05:45,032
*Знае го нали светът -
сладки са когато спят!*

When there are famous heroes who are not known or famous enough in the target language, it is appropriate for them to be replaced with known and recognizable names. Here are few examples:

4) 00:34:57,310 --> 00:34:59,608

Just think about

a few names, will you?

00:34:59,645 --> 00:35:01,909

Loch Ness, Bigfoot,

the Abominable Snowman

00:34:56,093 --> 00:34:59,722

Спомни си някои знаменитости!

Лох Нес, Змей Горанин...

Some suggestions

In the movie *Monsters Inc* there is an agency for child detection (CDA in subtitles). In Bulgarian it is translated as the Bureau for children`s detection. In the Abbreviation CDA I see monster`s CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) or FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation). And because both Abbreviations are familiar in Bulgarian I would have translated the monster`s CDA differently:

5) Original:

00:18:05,164 --> 00:18:07,689

Oh, not the CDA.

00:18:02,911 --> 00:18:06,452

Пак тези от Бюрото

за откриване на деца!

My suggestion:

Пак тези от ФБРД²

² ФБРД – Федерално бюро за разследване и откриване на деца (Federal Bureau for Investigating and Finding Children)

To make the translation even more appealing to children I will also give my own suggestion for *scare floor* and *scarer*. I think new versions are appropriate because they can give a clearer image of both the words and the scene, and they can also create some comic effect, which is typical for children`s literature.

6) original:

00:09:22,620 --> 00:09:23,712

*See you on the scare floor,
buddy!*

00:09:19,904 --> 00:09:21,991

Ще се видим на плаш-формата !

my suggestion:

Ще се видим на плашит-формата!

7) original:

01:04:17,773 --> 01:04:20,264

*Because of you, I had
to banish my top scarer!*

01:04:15,039 --> 01:04:17,708

Прокудих моя най-добър служител !

my suggestion:

Заради теб прокудих най-добрия си плашител!

Conclusion

Translating for children is not an easy task, especially when the translators have to aim at pleasing a dual audience – adults and children. No matter if translating a book or subtitles, the problems which translators face are the same. In animated movies we also have “illustrations” (which are moving) and they challenge translators for producing true and at the same time enjoyable character`s speech. As we know children have a big imagination. To make a really good translation I think all translators have to tune themselves in with

their young audience and start dreaming big. I have always loved to watch animated movies, so do children. And I'm sure that, translating for children either a book or a movie is an enjoyable and fun occupation for every translator.

References

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